Today I want to talk about three things – about additional aid to East Pakistani refugees, about additional assistance for nursing home patients and about the work of the C.S.I.R.O.

There has been a great deal of attention given to the tragic problems in the Indian sub-continent. These problems have arisen out of differences between East and West Pakistan. This had led to a flood of East Pakistani refugees moving into India. This has presented India with a great and difficult problem. These difficulties have caught the imagination and sympathy of many people in Australia. The problems have been highlighted by the silent fasting vigil of people sitting on the G.P.O. steps in Melbourne and then going to Canberra and resuming their vigil there in front of Parliament House. Many individuals have spoken to me about it and have written. I was more than glad, therefore, when the Minister for Foreign Affairs announced a doubling of Australian aid to East Pakistani refugees to a total of $3 million. The aid will be provided in the form of rice, some given directly to India for the refugees and some for distribution through United Nations agencies, to be distributed in East Pakistan itself. It is a problem that should stir the world.

Last week the Prime Minister announced substantial additional support for nursing home patients. The Prime Minister pointed out that the number of nursing home patients has increased from 33,000 to 47,000 over the last five years. He pointed out that support for nursing home patients amounted to nearly $50 million in the last financial year. A number of these nursing homes have been running into problems because of steep increases in costs, especially in
nurses' salaries. As an interim measure, the Government therefore decided that benefits for patients receiving ordinary nursing home care would be increased from $2.00 to $3.50 per day, or $24.50 a week. Benefits for patients receiving intensive care would also be increased by $1.50 a day to $45.50 a week. The sums don't sound very great perhaps, but they are put into context when you realise that they will cost $24 million in a full year.

This action has been taken in pursuit of the Government's policy of assisting the sick and the aged where areas of need appear. Nursing home benefits are but one of the provisions made to help aged persons. Assistance is given in other ways— in the pension and related payments, assistance with aged persons' housing and assistance provided through the home care programme. I emphasise again that this is an interim measure and will take effect as soon as the necessary legislation is passed by Parliament.

Last week I also tabled the Annual Report for the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization. This organization is continuing to undertake a great deal of work which should be of benefit to people in the country. The organization is playing a central role in important industrial trials of new equipment and testing techniques to enable wool to be sold on the basis of objective tests and samples. The C.S.I.R.O.'s automatic wool coring machine is an important part of the tests. If these tests are successful, they should hasten a dramatic change in the marketing of the Australian clip—a change which many people believe is much overdue. The C.S.I.R.O. Department of Animal Health has discovered that cattle can act as carriers of foot rot and pass it on to sheep. It now appears that this apparent cross infection between cattle and sheep could be significant in the case of other important stock diseases. Laboratory tests have shown that another organism which appears harmless to cattle can be
passed on to sheep and cause lesions in lambs or still births. Sheep have been found to be carriers of a cattle virus. The sheep show no symptoms at all but readily transmit the disease to cattle in contact with them. These researches will have significant implications for farmers who run both sheep and cattle.

In February of this year, permanent press wool slacks and trousers that can be machine washed and drip dried or tumble dried without shrinkage or loss of shape, went on the Australian market for the first time. The process was developed by the Division of Textile Industry of the C.S.I.R.O. At the moment, production capacity limits the process to slacks and trousers but experiments have been undertaken to extend the process to shirts, blouses, skirts, tunics and other woollen clothes.

If anyone would like a copy of the C.S.I.R.O. Annual Report, which has a great deal of interesting information in it, they could write to me and I will send them a copy.